

REGIONAL

Foothill communities receive grants from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for forest, watershed health projects

Author: Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)

Published on Jun 12, 2014 - 1:19:16 PM

McArthur June 12, 2014 - Funding awarded today by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Governing Board may facilitate the conversion of unused industrial sites into new community assets. The Conservancy authorized \$143,590 during the its quarterly meeting in McArthur for two projects that will improve forest and watershed health, and provide for future economic development in Yuba and Amador Counties. The funding is from Proposition 84, passed by voters in 2006.

"Reducing the risk of large, damaging fires and cleaning up mining legacylands are among our highest priorities," said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. "Having high quality projects like these coming from our communities are great opportunities to invest the public's funds wisely."

Funding was awarded to the **Camptonville Community Partnership** for the Camptonville Forest Biomass Business Center Feasibility Study. This grant will enable the community to explore developing a biomass-to-energy facility at the site of a sawmill that closed in the 1990's near Camptonville, CA. Excess biomass, or the small-diameter woody material, branches, and diseased or insect infested wood removed from forests, can be used to create renewable energy, while at the same time protecting forests and communities from large, damaging wildfires.

"The people of Camptonville and the surrounding community are excited to be moving forward with our plans to develop the former Sierra Mountain Mills site as a center for businesses that utilize woody biomass and small diameter logs," said Cathy LeBlanc, Co-Executive Director of the Camptonville Community Partnership. "We appreciate and value this effort for its potential to help reduce fire threat, protect the watershed and create local jobs."

The **City of Jackson** was awarded a grant to evaluate the removal of abandoned mine waste tailings on a 159 acre parcel of legacy mine lands adjacent to the City. This property was purchased by the City of Jackson in 2006 and is slated to be used for a park and open space after the mine land remediation is completed.

"The City of Jackson has been working with EPA, Department of Toxic Substance Control, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to evaluate and clean up this former gold mine disposal area," said City Manager Mike Daly. "Granting these funds is a critical 'next step' towards opening the property to the public."

Toxic substances associated with legacy mining, in particular mercury, have far reaching impacts to human health and water quality. The Oro De Amador Removal Action Workplan Project will assess removal strategies and develop management alternatives for the mine waste tailings in order to protect human health and nearby waterways.

In addition to the grant awards, the Board also reviewed the Conservancy's accomplishments over the past year, approved an Action Plan for next fiscal year, and heard a guest presentation on agritourism from Penny Leff, Agritourism Coordinator for the University of California's Small Farm Program.

About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Governing Board

Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency whose mission is to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC has awarded over \$50 million in grants for projects to protect and enhance the health of California's primary watersheds by improving forest health, remediating mercury contamination from abandoned mines, protecting critical natural resources and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.